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August 15, 1975

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25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

CONTENTS

BANGLADESH: Coup replaces Mujibur Rahman	1
PORTUGAL: Costa Gomes calls emergency meeting of Revolutionary Council	2
ANGOLA: Heavy fighting among liberation groups	5
FRANCE: Plans to withdraw troops from West Germany	7

25X1



USSR-PORTUGAL: Soviets giving heavy play to Portugal	13
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25X1



CHINA: Long-missing regional commander reappears	17
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25X1



25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

BANGLADESH

The army mounted a successful coup early today against the government of Mujibur Rahman. There have been conflicting reports over the fate of Mujib. Some claim he is under house arrest, others assert he has been killed.

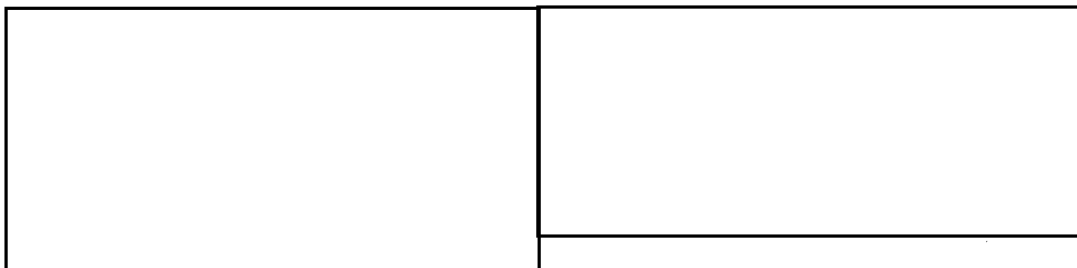
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Former commerce minister Kondakar Mushtaque Ahmed has been named President. Martial law has been imposed, a 24-hour curfew is in effect in Dacca, and the airport has been closed. The country now will reportedly be called the Islamic Republic of Bangladesh.

It is not yet clear exactly which elements of the military were involved or what the nature of the new government will be.

Ahmed, however, is a moderate who has been described as the most pro-Western cabinet member and leader of the moderate faction of the ruling party. As Ahmed seeks to consolidate his political power, he may well seek the support of rightist elements in his party who recently have been in political eclipse. They have long been displeased with what they viewed as Bangladesh's leftward drift, Mujib's alleged dependence on India and the Soviet Union, and his increasingly authoritarian rule.

Popular reaction to the coup is thus far unknown. While few Bengalees have dared to speak out against Mujib in recent months, discontent had been widespread with his rule, especially his inability to deal effectively with the country's continuing serious economic problems.



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India will be watching developments in Bangladesh closely. New Delhi views the maintenance of a stable and friendly government in Dacca as vital to its interests. Yet, the Indians are very sensitive to Bengalee charges of alleged continuing interference in the country's internal affairs. New Delhi would be most reluctant to intervene directly by committing troops unless Bangladesh authorities were obviously unable to prevent a complete breakdown of law and order. Even then, New Delhi would presumably wait for the government in Dacca to request its assistance.

25X1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

PORTUGAL

President Costa Gomes called an emergency meeting of the Revolutionary Council last night amid growing pressure for the removal of Prime Minister Goncalves.

Lisbon newspapers reported yesterday that former foreign minister Antunes is amending his manifesto to include some of the points in the plan unveiled by security chief Carvalho on Wednesday. It is doubtful that Antunes or his supporters would accept many of the radical proposals, but sufficient agreement might be found to permit a loose alliance against Goncalves.

Although Carvalho personally presented the plan to a large gathering of military officers and it was written by officers under his command, Carvalho himself has not yet publicly endorsed it. Lisbon radio reports that a spokesman for the security forces says the document is being erroneously attributed to Carvalho's command. Carvalho, thus, might be willing to disassociate himself from those proposals most objectionable to the Antunes group—like the rejection of EC assistance, of closer ties to Western Europe, and of government by political parties.

Another sign that the anti-Goncalves movement may be snowballing is the reported firing of Colonel Varela Gomes, the driving force behind the pro-Communist propaganda division of the armed forces general staff. The propaganda division has come under increasingly heavy attack for its pro-Communist orientation, and Varela Gomes' dismissal may be an attempt to head off wholesale reorganization or abolition of the unit.

Socialist leader Soares reportedly tried to convince the President that Goncalves should be fired immediately. President Costa Gomes, who has been in contact with both the Socialists and the Communists in the past two days, apparently made no promises and is said to have asked Soares to wait 45 days to give him time to sort things out.

Costa Gomes may have used his meetings with the party leaders to caution them on their plans to hold rival demonstrations last night in Lisbon. Some 20,000 Socialists marched to the presidential palace chanting slogans in favor of the Antunes manifesto and against Goncalves. The Communists attracted about 15,000 in support of the Prime Minister. An extreme left-wing demonstration in front of the US embassy was short-lived and drew only 1,000 to 2,000 people. The demonstrations were held without incident.

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

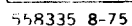
While the forces arrayed against Goncalves appear more than sufficient to force his removal, he has so far refused to budge, perhaps in the hope that his opponents, who range across the political spectrum, will be unable to reach any final agreement. Should, for instance, Antunes and Carvalho fail to come together, Goncalves and the Communists might seek to play them off against each other.

Any move by rightist forces might also relieve the pressure on the Prime Minister. Such a move could well play into the hands of the Communists and radicals, who charge that Antunes is opening the way for the "fascists" to regain control of Portugal.

25X1

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National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

ANGOLA

Heavy fighting involving all three of Angola's liberation groups broke out early Wednesday morning in the major port city of Lobito. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola reportedly was pushed out of Lobito and is now holding firm at Benguela, 12 miles to the south.

In Luanda, meanwhile, the Popular Movement is attempting to take advantage of its strong position in the city. A spokesman for the group announced on August 11 that it is taking charge of the Ministry of Labor and Social Services, which was run by the National Union until the transitional government collapsed. The National Union voluntarily withdrew from the city, rather than risk being dragged into a fight for which it was ill-prepared. According to the US consul, the Popular Movement is also quietly taking over a number of other posts vacated by its two rivals.

In the meantime, the Front is attempting to down play its reverses in Luanda. The Front's chief representative declared in a press interview in Kinshasa that the transitional government is not defunct and announced that it would soon be convoked "at some secure locality in Angola."

The Portuguese military commander yesterday announced, however, that in the absence of any functioning government, he is assuming administrative responsibility for the territory. His announcement makes official what already is the case.

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National Intelligence Bulletin

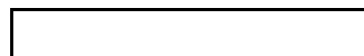
August 15, 1975

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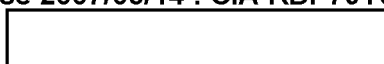
It is evident that no one knows what to do next. Portuguese military officials in Lisbon and Luanda are too distracted by the political struggles in Lisbon to offer any solutions. With the exception of Savimbi, liberation group leaders seem resigned to making the best of whatever military or political situation presents itself.

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National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

FRANCE

Press accounts that the French plan to withdraw a large number of their troops stationed in West Germany appear to be overdrawn, [REDACTED]

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The wave of press speculation in France and West Germany was touched off by a report published earlier this week in the French newsmagazine *Le Point*. It was quickly picked up by the West German press. *Le Point* claimed that armed forces chief of staff General Mery planned to reduce French troops stationed in West Germany by a third.

The French Ministry of Defense has issued a formal denial of the report, and a high official of the French Foreign Ministry has told the US embassy that he had no knowledge of such plans. [REDACTED]

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West German officials take the press report seriously and are trying to find out what the French position is. Bonn is also reviewing the bilateral troop-stationing agreement made in 1967 to find out what formal notification, if any, would be required if the French do wish to withdraw their forces.

French forces in West Germany are part of the French 1st Army, which is the nation's main battle force. In the event of war, the 1st Army's mission is to engage in frontline combat beyond French borders in support of NATO forces.

While the process of streamlining the French army may result in modest reductions in troop levels in West Germany, several factors militate against a sizable cutback:

--One of the bases of French foreign policy is that they should maintain their forces in West Germany.

25X1

Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00975A028000010027-1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

--West German hackles would be raised if there were major withdrawals.

--A large reduction would run counter to Giscard's policy of maintaining a close relationship between Bonn and Paris.

--There is little evidence of domestic pressure on Giscard to reduce French forces in West Germany.

--There is no evidence that Giscard sees defense budget restraints as sufficiently pressing to override fundamental French policy objectives.

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Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00975A028000010027-1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

USSR-PORTUGAL

Moscow is giving heavy play to events in Portugal with one eye to preparing a rationale for a defeat of the Portuguese Communists. The Soviets are also still building a case that Portugal should not be charged to their detente account, arguing that it is the West that is interfering in Portugal's internal affairs.

Moscow has been unusually candid in reporting to its domestic audience the travails of the Portuguese Communists, including the attacks on the party's facilities and people in northern Portugal. Despite distortions in the reporting, there emerges a picture of significant grass-roots anti-Communist feeling in Portugal.

The Soviets are also lining up a cast of villains. Vague accusations of Western meddling have become more specific. The Soviets have recently repeated allegations of CIA connections with opponents of the provisional government. There have been attacks on the "shameful campaign" waged by the Western press and criticism of the EC for postponing its decision on offering economic aid to Portugal.

This line may be intended to provide the domestic audience with a rationalization in case of a debacle for the Portuguese Communists. It has also been aimed at an international audience, betraying Moscow's sensitivity to charges that it should be held responsible for any further leftward swing in Portugal. Moscow is saying that two can play that game, as it disingenuously charges elements in the West with violating the CSCE agreement in Portugal.

There has been little evidence in the Soviet commentary of major differences between Moscow and the Portuguese Communist Party. The Soviets have followed Portuguese Communist chief Cunhal's lead on the Portuguese Socialists and have pulled no punches in blaming the Socialists for the current political crisis. A recent issue of the *Literary Gazette* referred to "anti-Communist hysteria unleashed by Mario Soares," and other commentaries have asserted that local "fascists" responsible for the anti-Communist acts have become members of the Portuguese Socialist Party.

None of this has been especially pleasant for Moscow, which at one time was pushing hard for a close relationship between the Communists and the Socialists. But Moscow has not completely given up on the idea of such an alliance. A *Pravda* report of a meeting between Soviet party secretaries Kirilenko and Ponomarev and an Italian Communist Party delegation says that both sides advocated a renewal of a broad-based leftist coalition in Portugal.

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

Soviet media have provided few clues about what, if any, action Moscow plans to take with regard to Portugal. An *Izvestia* article of July 16 said, "In particular, as practice shows, Portugal can count on active economic and political cooperation with the socialist countries." This statement, somewhat ambiguous in itself, has not been amplified or reiterated. On July 24, however, *Pravda* did replay the call of the Belgian Communist Party chairman for European leftists to lend "maximum support" to the Portuguese revolution. In recent days, the Soviets have used front groups such as the World Peace Council to proclaim their support of the "people" of Portugal and their opposition to "imperialist intrigue."

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Next 1 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Approved For Release 2007/03/14 : CIA-RDP79T00975A028000010027-1

National Intelligence Bulletin

August 15, 1975

CHINA

The reappearance of Lanchou Military Region commander Han Hsien-chu in his region after an absence of more than a year and a half suggests that the political status of all 11 of China's regional commanders has finally been resolved. Nine of the commanders have now appeared this month; the other two are probably not in political trouble.

Han was not identified by title, but he appeared on August 10 at the funeral of a Lanchou Military Region officer in the company of the region's first political commissar. His only previous appearance in Lanchou was on December 31, 1973, the date Peking announced the rotation of eight regional commanders. Han, who has been severely criticized because of his ties to former defense minister Lin Piao, apparently has been in Peking in the interim.

The apparent decision by Peking to make its peace with the regional commanders is in line with its year-long emphasis on unity, stability, and economic production. The regime has also refurbished the image of the People's Liberation Army and rehabilitated such once-discredited figures as former chief of staff Lo Jui-ching, an opponent of Lin whose past views mesh with the current effort to reduce the military's political involvement.



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